

## Part I: Inductive Bible Study

### A. Introduction

One of the most valuable skills a Christian can develop is the ability to study the Word of God for himself and to apply it in his own life. The method of inductive Bible study offers such an opportunity. This method is an effective, practical way of arriving at the meaning and application of a Bible passage. To make it easy to follow, a numbered guide has been designed and supplied for you at the back of this booklet. When you have used this method with a few passages of Scripture, you will “catch onto” the method and will be able to use the guide easily without the instructions.

What is inductive Bible study? The word “inductive” refers to the way we process information and come to conclusions. When we think inductively we begin with specific facts and details and then draw general conclusions (interpretations and application) from those details. When we apply this type of thinking to Bible study, we observe the facts of a passage and then derive general principles from those facts. This involves studying the background of the passage, considering the context, understanding the words and grammar, and grasping the author’s intention.

This study method may be used for private devotions, for a leader’s preparation of a Bible study, for a small group’s study time together, or for group members’ individual preparation before a meeting. A group leader may wish to supplement the study with his own lecture or discussion questions. Inductive studies are especially effective in groups where people can share their insights, research and application, and where leaders can hold members accountable for completing the study. It is recommended that a group be kept to twelve people or less (See *A Small Group Manual*, WDA).

Inductive Bible study skills are taught in Phase Three of the five phase discipleship growth process. Thus, a disciple can study biblical truths helpful at this stage while learning a practical Bible study skill that will last a lifetime. We suggest beginning with the passages that contain Phase Three truths (e.g. Romans 1-8) and then moving to passage of your own choosing. A well-outlined study bible can be helpful. The New International Version (published by Zondervan) has excellent paragraph and idea divisions.

A word about commentaries needs to be added here. While commentaries (an in depth study of scripture) are useful tools, it is important for the bible student to do his own study of a passage before reading a commentary. This encourages the student to do the mentally and spiritually challenging work of studying and allows the Holy Spirit to reveal truth directly to the student. After a study is complete, it can be helpful to read several commentaries to investigate different viewpoints.

Following are instructions about how to do an inductive study. (See sample guide at the back of this booklet.) Studies on Acts 17:22-31 (historical passage) and Acts 8:26-40 (teaching passage) are given as samples at the back of this booklet. A suggestion for learning this skill is to follow the instructions and fill-in a blank Inductive Bible Study Guide on these passages. Then, after completing each numbered section in the guide, compare your completed guide with the sample. Your answers will not be exactly like the ones in the samples. If hundreds of different people did this study, no two would do it exactly the same way. But many of the main points should be similar.

As you begin your study, write the passage reference in the upper right-hand corner of the guide. Take time to pray and ask God to teach you the truths of the passage and ask the Holy Spirit to apply them to your life. Remember, "The thought of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:10,11).